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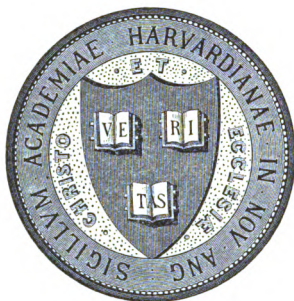
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THOMAS HILL, D.D.,

LATE PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY.

THE GIFT OF HIS CHILDREN.

4 January, 1892.

JESUS
AND
THE RESURRECTION.

AN EASTER POEM

DEDICATED TO THE
SUNDAY SCHOOL OF THE FIRST PARISH,
GLOUCESTER,
BY THE PASTOR, REV. J. B. GREEN.

1888.

4 January, 1892.

From the Library of
THOMAS HILL, D

JESUS
AND THE RESURRECTION.

The Church of Christ, his well beloved Bride,
Lays off to-day her mournful weeds of woe,
And chastely decks herself in bridal robes
To greet, with joyous heart, her risen Lord.
Rejoice with her, O sons of men, and sing;
Sing with the heart her sacred songs of joy,
For he who rose triumphant from the tomb
Hath vanquished sin, and fear, and death, for you;
And lives on high to win thy souls to life.
List to the tale the Gospels simply tell:

Three brief, eventful years of public life,
And he who spake as never man before,
In love, the burden of Eternal Truth
The truth concerning God, concerning man,
That God the Universal Father is,
And man, his loved, tho' weak and wayward child,
Living unconscious of his Father's love,
That God would fain reclaim from death and sin
And win to life eternal and divine
His children all—for all, in truth are His;
But, three brief years had scarcely come and gone,
When He who dared such truth unfold to man,

By man was thwarted in his sacred work,
And spurned by those he sought in love to save;
Was charged as recreant to God and Truth,
And threatened with a malefactor's doom.

Prophetic soul, with wond'rous insight clear.
He saw it all, nor shrank to face it all.
But ah! His little band, the faithful few,
Among the faithless many faithful found—
The few who left their nets, their trade, their all,
Because their hearts were touched by Jesus' word—
Can they retain their faith, in God, and man,
Their faith in Love's omnipotence o'er sin,
And yet behold the sinless Son of God
A bleeding victim on the hateful tree,
His death permitted by the Righteous God?
Their weak and wavering faith the Master knew,
And knew their need of helping from on high,
And fain would fit them for the trying hour;
But now, that hour alas! is near at hand.

- By his appointment, in an upper room
At close of day, around the social board
They meet; once more to keep the Paschal feast;
The feast their fathers kept with sacred joy,
Since that far day, when Moses led them forth
A people free, from bondage long endured.

The twelve are there and Jesus in the midst ;
But list, alas ! his heart-distressing speech :
"There's one of you shall me this night betray."
With downcast, sorrowing hearts, and much perplex,
They all cry out, "O ! say, Lord, is it I ?"
" 'Tis he whose hand is with mine in the dish."
"Not I," said Judas, treason in his heart,
Dissimulation on his brazen face.
" 'Tis thou," said he, frankly, but yet in love,
"And what thou doest, do at once, I pray."
But little dreamt his wondering followers there,
The import of his speech to Judas then ;
Nor dared to think the traitor meant him ill.
(Let God, alone, the judge of Judas be.)

The feast now kept, the Paschal supper done,
The Master sad and sorrowing unto death,
The cross now looming on his quickened sight,
His little band he now can scattered see.
And so he took the bread, and brake, and said,
"My body this—and broken thus—for you,"
And took the cup, and said, "And this, my blood,
'Tis shed for you ; oh eat, and drink, and live !"
The mystic meaning of his speech yet hid.
A hymn they sang, and left the supper room ;
And sought the slope of lovely Olivet ;
The ancient stars above them keeping watch.

The midnight Garden Agony came on ;
When earnest prayed the faithful Son of God,
The bitter cup, now given him, might pass ;
(A bitter cup it surely must have been,
An unresisting, ignominious death
To die, at hands of those he lived to bless,)
But still, "The Father's will be done" his prayer ;
And strength to do that will the Father gave ;
Nor faltered once the brave, devoted Soul,
But onward went, in trust his cross to bear :
Oh heavy cross and borne with God-like mien !

The treacherous kiss, the threatening, murderous band,
With swords and staves as for a robber come ;
The cruel mockings in the Judgment Hall ;
The hateful scourge ; the painful, thorny crown ;
The scoffing, jeering, hooting, ribald mob :
Not all could once extort from him a word,
A look, unworthy of the Son of God.
He died as few, or none, before, or since,
His faith in God, unshaken and complete ;
His love for man, his death itself declares ;
O life divine ! O death beyond compare !
He lived alone to bless, he died to save ;
Forgiving prayer for those who took his life
The latest burden of his God-like heart.

But where, oh where his faithful followers now!
The men who left their little all for him,
And trusted he a kingdom soon would build,
When each should be an honored man, in trust,
Ruling in state, in honor held of men.
Alas! their earth-born hopes are shattered, all,
And he himself, they hoped would rule as King,
By hand of those he was to rule is slain.
He, followers now, alas! had few, or none,
They fled, their faith yet weak, tho' fond their love.
Nor could they now do other than suppose
Their hopes in him were vain, delusive, all.
"A man of noble mold, indeed, was he,
A loving friend to all the sons of men;
But not the man to grapple with the times,
Or build the kingdom which we long to see,
Too mild by far, too gentle in his way,
Too backward he to draw the sword and smite."

In deepest gloom, and disappointment sore,
They turn them to the old, familiar ways;
In grim despair doubting if God will deign
Fulfill the promise made, and send a king
To build the Hebrew Commonwealth again.

* * * * *

The tragedy on Calvary is o'er,
Night's sable mantle hides the gastly scene;
The lifeless form is taken from the cross,
In spotless linen wrapped with reverent care,
And borne to Joseph's rock-hewn tomb and laid;
(And with it, laid the hopes of many hearts;)
The stone is set and sealed, and placed the watch,
A Roman guard ("lest his disciples come
And steal the body from its resting place;")
So said the Pharasees, the guilty men
Who bargained for his life, and feared the worst;
Feared he might rise, as he himself had said—
Believers in a resurrection, they.)

* * * * *

The Sabbath came and went, the solemn day,
The day sacred to God in Jewish thought;
And doubtless, Jesus' murderers duly prayed,
Thanking God they were not like other men,
Unjust, impure, but fasting twice a week,
And paying tithes to keep the Temple up."

The Day is done, the formal worship o'er,
And, as the grey dawn streaks the morning sky,
Behold the eager women, love-impelled,
Laden with spices, seek the Master's tomb;
Magdala's Mary, she whose truth-touched heart
Welled tears of penitence on Jesus' feet,

His gracious word so cheered her hopeless heart ;
And other women, whom his life had blessed,
Were fain to show that gratitude and love
Which Calvary's wild commotion sore repressed.
They reach the tomb, their sacred rights to pay ;
A horror seized their hearts and struck them dumb ;
The stone is moved, the body is not there,
His foes, relentless, must have robbed the tomb.
Perplexed and sad, their hearts in blank despair,
They gaze bewildered on the vacant place ;
When, lo ! a vision met their wondering eyes,
A man in shining garments, bright, appeared !
But some said two they saw, yet scarce could tell
So startled were they all to learn, alas !
That Jesus' precious body was not there.

Afraid, they bowed them to the earth,
So sore distressed that love's last offices
Were thus denied to him they loved so well.

'The Vision spake, and gently, softly, said,
'Why seek ye here the living 'mong the dead ?
Thy gracious Lord is risen, he is not here,
Remember how he spake, himself, to you,
While yet he walked with you in Galilee.
'The son of man to hands of sinful men
Must be delivered up and crucified,
And three days after shall arise again.' "

The words the women well remembered then,
Their import never understood before.
Then, quickly from the empty tomb they sped,
To tell the brethren of the risen Lord.

Their words, alas! but seemed as idle tales;
The brethren, hopeless, could not well believe;
But loving John, and ardent Peter, ran
To look upon the empty tomb themselves;
And, stooping down, they saw the vacant place;
The linen clothes, wherewith the Lord was wrapped,
They saw there laid, but saw not Jesus' self.

In wonder great at what had come to pass,
They left the place, hope dawning in their hearts
That Jesus' face again they yet might see;
Nor were they long denied the sight.
The Master showed himself to one and all;
To Mary weeping by the empty tomb;
To some, as they to Emmaus village went,
He spake at length, unfolding precious truth,
And as they sat at meat, he took the bread,
And blessed and brake, and gave to them, and lo!
Their eyes were opened, and they knew their Lord.

* * * * *

But doubted Some the truth of what they heard,
Thomas of Didymus among the rest;
And when the others told to him the tale,

Brave, honest man, he frankly them replied,
"Except I see the nail-prints in his hands,
And in the print myself my finger put,
And thrust my hand into his spear-pierced side,
I will not this, your doubtful tale, believe."

And after eight brief days had come and gone,
The faithful few, with Thomas were within,
And Jesus came, and in the midst he stood.
He spake and said, "My peace be unto you."
And, pitying Thomas' feeble faith, he said,
"Thy finger hither reach, behold my hands ;
Hither reach thy hand, thrust it in my side,
Be not, Thomas, faithless, but believing."
The startled Thomas cried, "My God! My Lord!"
"Because thou hast me seen, thou hast believed,"
The Master said, "but, Thomas, blessed they
Who, tho' they have not seen, yet have believed."
And other signs the Master truly gave
Which find no record in the sacred books.

Swift as glad news from some far country speeds,
So sped the story on from heart to heart,
That Christ had burst the bonds of death and lived.
The downcast band took heart for work again,
The deeper truth concerning Life and Death,
The truth which God through Christ would fain reveal,

The truth which takes from death its bitter sting,
And gives to life perennial hope and joy ;
The truth they saw not in the blaze of day,
Began to dawn upon their dark despair :
That he who lives in love with God for man
No death shall know, but more abundant life.
Their faith, by simple, daily trust increased,
And courage gave to face each daily fear,
At length grew mighty as a rushing tide,
And moved resistless on to victory.
Their souls triumphant rose o'er sin and death,
And held high converse with the Source of Life.
Inspired of Heaven, they spake in love, the truth ;
Till peoples, princes, potentates, and powers,
In glad allegiance gave their hearts to Christ.
And so the Kingdom of the Lord increased,
While other Kingdoms came, and went ; till now,
The Kingdom of the once rejected Christ,
O'erspreads the world, still blessing and to bless.



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